

## Message Text

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12

ACTION AGR-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-09 ISO-00 EB-07 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SS-15

NSC-05 COME-00 TRSE-00 /054 W

----- 051926

R 070904Z NOV 75

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7922

INFO USLO, PEKING 6277

UNCLAS HONG KONG 13333

FOR AGRICULTURE, FAS, FCA, GRAIN AND FEED DIVISION

FROM: AGRICULTURAL OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, CH

SUBJECT: SHORTFALL IN PRC WINTER WHEAT SOWING

BEGIN SUMMARY: CHINA MAY PRODUCE LESS WHEAT IN 1976 THAN IT DID THIS YEAR, IF EARLY REPORTS OF WINTER WHEAT SOWING PROVE TO BE ACCURATE INDICATORS OF NEXT SUMMER'S HARVEST POTENTIAL. ALTHOUGH NEARLY THE ENTIRE GROWING SEASON LIES AHEAD, AND OPTIMUM WEATHER CONDITIONS MAY CHARACTERIZE THE 1975-76 WINTER WHEAT GROWING SEASON, PRC'S PEASANTS APPARENTLY HAVE FAILED NOT ONLY TO MEET GOALS FOR EXPANDED AREA SOWN TO WINTER WHEAT, BUT ALSO VERY LIKELY FAILED TO REACH LAST YEAR'S LEVEL.

END SUMMARY.

1. EARLY RESULTS AND ESTIMATES OF SOWING ACHIEVEMENTS IN PROVINCE-LEVEL UNITS ACCOUNTING FOR SLIGHTLY LESS THAN HALF OF CHINA'S WINTER WHEAT AREA REVEAL A GOOD PERFORMANCE IN HOPEH, A MAJOR WHEAT-PRODUCING

PROVINCE, WHERE SOWN AREA WAS INCREASED BY 16-17 PERCENT OVER 1974-75 TO REACH 2.4 MILLION HECTARES. PEKING AND TIENTSIN, LARGE MUNICIPALITIES IN SAME AREA, BOTH INCREASED SOWN AREA OVER 1974-75, BUT TIENTSIN FELL SHORT OF TARGET FOR EXPANDED PLANTINGS. SOWING WAS CARRIED OUT UNDER ABNORMALLY DRY CONDITIONS, WITH RAINFALL THROUGHOUT SEPTEMBER AND MOST OF EARLY OCTOBER FAR BELOW AVERAGE AND SOIL MOISTURE LEVELS 60-70 PERCENT BELOW

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NORMAL.

2. OFFSETTING THAT ACCOMPLISHMENT WAS POOR PERFORMANCE IN SECOND-LARGEST WHEAT PROVINCE, SHANTUNG, AND AN OTHER IMPORTANT PRODUCER, SHENSI. SHANTUNG AND SHENSI BOTH FAILED TO REACH EITHER 1974-75 LEVELS OR PLANNED LEVELS FOR WINTER WHEAT SOWING FOR 1975-76 PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF HEAVY RAINS DURING OPTIMUM SOWING PERIOD IN SEPTEMBER AND EARLY OCTOBER. ALTHOUGH NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON SOWING RESULTS IN NEIGHBORING HONAN (CHINA'S LEADING WHEAT-GROWING PROVINCE) AND SHANSI, ANOTHER IMPORTANT WHEAT PROVINCE, IT IS KNOWN THAT THEY ALSO SUFFERED FROM EXCESSIVELY HEAVY RAINS IN SEPTEMBER AND EARLY OCTOBER WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY AFFECTED SOWING PROGRESS AND RESULTS.

3. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT SHANTUNG AND SHENSI TOGETHER FELL 600-700,000 HA SHORT OF LAST YEAR'S PERFORMANCE AND EVEN FURTHER BELOW THIS YEAR'S INCREASED TARGETS. WITH STILL FURTHER SOWING SHORTFALLS ASSUMED FOR HONAN AND SHANSI, THERE IS LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT GAINS MADE IN HOPEH AND POSSIBLE SMALL GAINS IN OTHER WINTER WHEAT AREAS OF LESSER IMPORTANCE (AS SOUTHERN CHINA, WHERE SOWING STILL UNDERWAY) WILL OFFSET PLANTING SHORTFALLS IN MAJOR AREAS OF NORTHERN CHINA. (IN THE ABSENCE OF REPORTS, HOWEVER, THAT IS CONJECTURE COVERING A LARGE AREA.) THERE IS ALSO LITTLE HOPE OF INCREASING SPRING WHEAT AREA (ONLY 10-15 PERCENT OF TOTAL WHEAT AREA) SUFFICIENTLY TO PROVIDE MUCH OFFSET FOR REDUCED PLANTINGS OF WINTER WHEAT.

4. IF 1975-76 GROWING SEASON WEATHER IS HIGHLY FAVORABLE, HIGH YIELDS MAY IN PART OFFSET THE REDUCTION IN PLANTED AREA. HOWEVER, THE OUTLOOK FOR CHINA'S 1976 WHEAT CROP AT THIS TIME, BASED ON HIGHLY FRAGMENTARY REPORTS AND MANY ASSUMPTIONS, IS NOT FAVORABLE.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, WHEAT  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 07 NOV 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:**  
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**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Office:** ACTION AGR  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ElyME  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 26 AUG 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <26 AUG 2003 by chicheje>; APPROVED <25 FEB 2004 by ElyME>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SHORTFALL IN PRC WINTER WHEAT SOWING BEGIN SUMMARY: CHINA MAY PRODUCE LESS WHEAT IN 1976 THAN IT DID THIS  
**TAGS:** EAGR, CH  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006